



Water Quality NewsFlash

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SWRCB / RWQCBs – Future changes? – A recent *LA Times* article reports mounting pressure from municipal and industry permittees to change the regulatory system for issuing wastewater permits. Currently, Regional Water Quality Control Boards issue most NPDES permits. Statewide permits, including Caltrans, are issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. Policies and permitting approaches differ significantly from Regional Board to Regional Board. For example, some Regional Board Basin Plans allow permits to include mixing zones (i.e., dilution credits), but some do not. Municipal stormwater permits differ significantly from region to region. The article quotes the Chairman of the SWRCB stating, “The current system of water boards is broken.”

It is expected that the Governor’s *California Performance Review* will propose major restructuring of the regulatory functions related to water quality. A recent memo from the Assoc. of California Water Agencies summarized potential changes. The discharge permitting and policy/ planning functions of the State Water Resources Control Board would be carried out by a division under the new Department of Environmental Quality (currently Cal EPA). The Board itself, as well as the Regional Water Quality Control Boards, would cease to exist but the regional offices and staff would continue. The water rights functions of the State Board would be transferred to the Department of Resources. The CPR report will be issued after the budget process is complete. The report will be the subject of hearings and most major changes will require legislative action. Article (requires sign-up): <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-water4jul04.1.3367617.story?coll=la-home-local> *California Performance Review* website: <http://cpr.ca.gov/>

Sediment Quality Objectives – Links to stormwater – The California Water Code requires the State Water Resources Control Board to develop sediment quality objectives (SQOs). These may be similar to the numeric objectives applied to water quality and would be used to identify sites needing cleanup or other protective measures. The state has set aside \$2.5 million dollars for this task and has already established several advisory committees. Sediment quality is increasingly being recognized as a significant factor in the environmental health of waterways. For example, the SF Bay Mercury TMDL targets sediment quality rather than the mercury concentration in the water column. A key issue in the development of standards is the mechanism of pollutant transfer from sediment to fish.

The sediment objectives will guide cleanup actions required by the statewide *Bay Protection Toxic Cleanup Program* (BPTCP) and may also be used by the TMDL program. The SQO staff intend to coordinate and integrate the SQO program with the statewide stormwater policy currently under development at the SWRCB. “SQOs could be used to identify which SW discharges do or do not represent a risk to beneficial uses.” Presentation: http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/bptcp/docs/sqo_061504_intro.ppt SQO site: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/bptcp/sqoac.html>

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